

**Trafficking of women from neighboring countries into China for marriage within the
context of gender imbalance¹**

Quanbao Jiang

Institute for Population and Development Studies

Xi'an Jiaotong University (China)

recluse_jqb@126.com

Ying Li

Institute for Population and Development Studies

Xi'an Jiaotong University (China)

liyings322@163.com

Jesús J. Sánchez-Barricarte

Carlos III University of Madrid (Spain)

jesusjavier.sanchez@uc3m.es

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Abstract:

Within the context of China's gender imbalance, cross-border trafficking of women from neighboring countries into China for marriage is an astonishingly increasing but neglected issue. In this explorative study, we first review the trafficking of women from several main source countries. Then we introduce the trafficking process and present a profile of the criminals. We still explore the actions to combat trafficking carried out by related stake-holders. Finally, we analyze the obstacles to the prevention and rescue of trafficked women. To completely eradicate trafficking in women, the Chinese government has to make long-term efforts to redress the gender imbalance.

Key Words: trafficking in women, gender imbalance, trafficking process, China

1- Introduction

China's strong traditional son preference and the low social status of females have led to discrimination against girls and to an unbalanced gender structure, thereby causing a shortage of women. At present and in the future, there will be a large number of young males each year who will not be able to find a Chinese spouse and who will be obliged to stay single and become bare branches. In China, women traditionally change their status through marriage, usually by choosing a spouse of higher status, i.e., hypergamous marriage. With the increase of female marriage migration, the majority of males who are unable to marry belong to the lowest social strata (Hesketh and Zhu, 2006). In 1990, the proportion of poor farmers who did not marry by age 40 was 19 percent; in 2000, 44.8 percent of males aged 30 with the least education had never married. Bare branch class, consisting of 40 to 50 million males, will come into being one of the lowest strata of Chinese society (Chen, 2006). In some remote poverty-stricken areas, bare branches from scattered locations have congregated together and formed "*bare branch villages*." A rapid increase in the number of such villages would affect the nation's sustainable development.

The shortage of females in some regions leads to the immigration of women from other countries and regions to look for jobs and marriage. With the rapid increase of jobs and marriage migration and the lucrative trade of the trafficking market, a large number of females were sold as brides or obliged to engage in the entertainment and sex industry (Vu and Nguyen, 2002). In the 21st century, the trafficking market of women and children has been growing rapidly and globally for the purpose of sex exploitation, forced marriage and compulsory labor. It is estimated that 600,000 to 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked abroad annually and 80% of them are women and girls (U.S. Department of State, 2007). The shortage of females has led those men who cannot find marriageable partners to the purchase of women from other areas, in China or abroad (Lee, 2005). When there is a shortage of women, they may be at risk of being abducted. The growth of the imbalanced sex ratio in Asia increases the demand for trafficked women, which has reached an alarming degree (U.S. Department of State, 2007).

Human trafficking is regarded as a version of slavery in modern society and as a serious violation of basic rights by the international community. It has become a grave social problem in mainland China (Pochagina, 2007). Although most trafficked women are engaged in the sex industry in developed countries, many trafficked women are sold as brides in China. China's imbalanced sex ratio increased the demand for female labors and wives (Le Bach et al., 2007).

The buyers for the trafficked women are all bare branches with ages between 28 to 36 in Guangde, Anhui (Zhou and Chang, 2006). In some villages, the marriage of abducted women accounts for 30-90% of the total number of marriages in the village (Coomaraswamy, 2003). The trafficked women mainly come from poverty-stricken areas and are eventually sold to the regions that have a shortage of females. With the development of China's economy, the number of trafficked women is also increasing (U.S. Department of State, 2007).

Besides the trafficked women from within China, other trafficked women who are sold as brides in China come from neighboring countries, including Vietnam, North Korea and Burma. The scarcity of females worsens trafficking, which then has an important influence on the most vulnerable group in surrounding countries as China becomes wealthier (Fragoso, 2007) and further harmfully affects China's international image.

In China's past, buying females for servants or concubines was legal, so even today this traditional ideology is deeply rooted in some Chinese people who regard buying brides as normal behavior. As the imbalance of China's sex ratio become severe, there will be more and more brides bought from neighboring countries (Jiang and Sánchez-Barricarte, 2011). The crime of trafficking women has caused great harm to women's individual rights, which is in defiance with national laws, causing serious damage to the protection of international human rights, creating social problems and severely threatening social and public safety and order.

Although there are some papers studying trafficking in China (Zhao, 2003; Pochagina, 2007; Jiang and Sánchez-Barricarte, 2011), there are few systematic studies which investigate trafficking women as brides from neighboring countries to

China within the context of the imbalanced sex ratio (KWAT, 2005; Davis, 2006; Kim et al., 2009). Currently, the most frequently quoted information on trafficking in East Asia does not contain a comprehensive regional report. Neither is there a reliable national report for evaluation, although there is an annual report on trafficking by the American State Council (Lee, 2005). Based on the background of a large number of bare branches resulting from the imbalanced sex ratio, this paper introduces the aspect of trafficked women from neighboring countries. It is divided into the following five parts. Firstly, we introduce the situation of trafficked women from North Korea, Vietnam and Burma; secondly, we discuss the process of trafficking women across boundaries; the third section analyzes endeavors by international society and governments to prevent and stop such crimes and we then investigate the barriers to guarding against and resolving problems of women trafficking across boundaries; the last section contains the discussion and conclusion.

2- Trafficked Women

There are three basic types of abducted women: those trafficked into the porn industry; those trafficked to provide cheap labor; and those trafficked for the purpose of being a bride. Some scholars hold that abducted women are mainly engaged in the porn industry. However, it is agreed that the shortage of females in China has caused males to be squeezed in the marriage market (most of them men in poverty-stricken areas). There have been frequent reports that women from Vietnam and North Korea were trafficked to China as brides (ILO, 2002; U.S Department of States, 2007). Vietnamese women were trafficked to villages in the southern part of China, whereas escaped North Korean women were deceived or encouraged to marry males in villages in the northeast provinces of China. This is the geographic distribution of trafficking in China (Lee, 2005). Against the current background of the imbalanced gender ratio, trafficking women from abroad to China has now taken on new features and we introduce the following according to the different scenarios in China's neighboring countries.

2.1- From North Korea

As the economy worsens and the lack of food increases, North Koreans escape from their own country to flee starvation, poverty and poor health. Because North Korea borders on the northeast of China and a large number of Korean people live there, this part of China has become the destination for many escaped Korean women, most of who tried to escape voluntarily. However, they are disadvantaged as they have no legal status and are frequently obliged to engage in the sex industry or are forced to work or else sold to be another's wife (U.S Department of State, 2007). It is estimated that over 100,000 North Korean women have entered China without going through legal channels, but between 80 to 90% percent of them are later abducted. The North Korean women who entered China illegally are in a very weak position as they face severe punishment if they are returned to their motherland their stay in China puts them at risk for being detained and arrested, both of which increase their vulnerability (Davis,2006;Kim et al., 2009).

There are some special characteristics of the trafficked North Korean women, such as the wide range of their ages, mostly distributed between 10 to 30, although there are also some women aged 40, 50 and even 60. Many are married and have children and most of them graduated from high school or college. They have a higher level of education than those from other countries. These North Korean victims at one time had stable jobs such as factory workers, farmers, engineers, government workers and businesswomen but they did not receive their wages. In order to survive, some of them cross the border to enter China, but they are often trafficked (Kim et al., 2009). One trafficked North Korean woman said that it is impossible for North Korean women who crossed the frontier to survive in China without being maltreated and sold (Davis, 2006).

Between 30% and 90% of the trafficked North Korean women were married to villagers in the northeast of China, serving as brides to the disadvantaged males in marriage market. In Helong, in Jiling province, most buyers of the North Korean women are older and have economic difficulties or else are disabled bare branches living in rural or mountainous areas. In order to shake off poverty, a large number of

young women in the remote and mountainous areas of China flock to work or get married outside, which make the bare branches increase in these areas. In order to get married and have children, buying North Korean women as wives has become one of the best solutions to the problem of bare branch marriage (Pei and Wang, 2000). In Yanbian County, there were a total of 19,871 bare branches aged from 25 to 45. It is not uncommon to see two or three bare branches in one family (Xu and Liang, 2007). One trafficked North Korean women said “I was sold to a 47 year old Chinese man as a wife and he did not have job skills and was seriously ill. There are some other North Korean women similar to me in that area” (U.S Department of State, 2007).

2.2- From Vietnam

The long drawn out Vietnam wars caused the Vietnamese population structure to become severely imbalanced, resulting in there being more women and fewer men. In addition, because of the imbalanced economy in Vietnam, the northern mountainous regions are still poor and the people there suffer from lack of food and clothing. Many local women regard outside marriage as an important way to change social status (Chu, 2011). China’s imbalanced gender ratio creates demand for women. Purchasing a Vietnamese bride is the only way to obtain a spouse for the sons of many poor families. Demand create supply, thus trafficking women including young girls is just the reaction to the market for wives (Le Bach et al., 2007). Since the 1980s, criminals have new opportunities as mobility has increased after the opening of borders between China and Vietnam. The trafficked women are often brought to the Chinese border counties by a Vietnamese trafficker and they are deceived into thinking they will find a job in mainland with the help of the trafficker’s Chinese friend (Li, 2003). Thousands of Vietnam women ages 15 to 45, mainly from the north, are trafficked to China with the promise of a high salary or marriage. The trafficked women are usually those from a poor family, with little education, who suffer from a family misfortune and lack social and legal information and who are

thus easily deceived (Nguyen Thi, 2011). Vietnam *State Action Project* fighting against trafficking of women and children stated on February 22, 2010, that China is the most targeted country for selling the trafficked Vietnam women, accounting for 65% of all relevant cases from 2004 and 2010 (Gao, 2010). Although there is not an exact number of victims, about 6,000 Vietnam women and children were trafficked in the past decade and mainland of China is one main destination according to the Vietnam Medias (Agence France-Presse, 2005).

Case 1

When I was selling rice rolls in a market, a young woman with a scarf came near and asked "Do you want to have a job?" "Why do you sell these?" "What you make is not enough for rice." "If you'd like, I'll introduce you to a job where you can earn several 100,000 dong (Vietnam monetary unit)". I dropped my rice roll basket and went away with her immediately. She took me to Dong Hung [in China]. We stayed there for two days and then traveled two more days to Guangzhou. Later the other five Vietnam women and I escaped (Le Bach et al., 2007)

Guangxi Province, which has a long border with Vietnam, has one of the highest sex ratios and is the focus of media reports and studies on trafficking Vietnam women (Le Bach et al., 2007). The city of Dongxing located in the southwest of Guangxi, has about 1,000 Vietnam women who live a *cross-country marriage* life without any legal proceedings and the majority of them are trafficked (Ma, 2003). The port city of Pingxiang released 103 Vietnam women in the fight against trafficking in 2000, including 59 women who were sold as wives (Sun, 2004). In recent years, Vietnamese brides have expanded to the mainland from the border as a result of the severity of the imbalanced sex ratio, exhibiting the development trend from south to north in China. Although some Vietnamese brides are voluntary, more and more Vietnamese women are kidnapped and forced to become brides (Chu, 2011). Many Vietnamese women were forced to marry older or disabled Chinese and some of them have married more than once (Vu and Nguyen, 2002).

2.3- From Burma

Under the reign of Myanmar's military regime, the increased prices of Burma daily commodities along with the rise of school tuition and medical expenses have made people's life hard to bear. As the political situation and economy worsen, more and more women hope to be given a job opportunity in order to support their family, making China's rapid economic development quite attractive to them. Because of Burmese women's low social status, poor family background and low level of education, these women are easier to deceive and traffic (KWAT, 2005). In the 1970s, some wife buying from Burma and Vietnam to the Yunnan province appeared, but that was just an isolated case. However, it has now become such an industry that there are thousands of civilian passages on the borders between China and Burma, which has created convenient advantages for trafficking women (Cui, 2010). The Yunnan police report that the number of trafficked Burmese women repatriated was only 54 in 2007, 87 in 2008 and 268 in 2009. However, this number is that officially released by the police and the actual number of kidnapped women is far higher than that. One office worker fighting against trafficking women and children reported that the number of trafficked women in 2009 was four times that of 2008 (Cui, 2010).

Most trafficked Burmese women are girls from rural areas and have lower levels of education and there are also some students from colleges or technical schools. Most of the trafficked women are jobless in their own country or work as servants, or have a small trade selling garments and food. Desperate to work, they are introduced to China and are then sold as wives to bare branches in mainland China. Crossing the border into Yunnan, tens of thousands of women enter China, hoping to find a good job, only to find themselves in the plight of being trafficked. The selling price rises quickly as the demand increases. In 2008, a young and attractive Burmese woman could be sold for 20,000 to 30,000 RMB, whereas women in poorer condition could be sold for less than 10,000. However in 2009, the price of a less desirable Burmese woman was higher than 38,000, going up to 40,000 and 50,000 for women in good condition. The popularity of the population market makes

trafficking women from Burma rampant (Cui, 2010). Most the trafficked Burmese girls do not understand Chinese and they communicate with the Chinese only through body language. They are sold to the remote poverty-stricken rural areas after being trafficked and most of their husbands are single farmers who are older or have a physical or mental impairment. Some older males with lower education in rural areas are poor and thus less competitive in the marriage market so they could not afford to marry a local bride. But they are very motivated by traditional ideology to carry on the family line. Thus, they need to buy a wife so as to have children and extend the family tree. At present, buying a wife has become a trend in some areas in China.

Case 2

Mijiaye, nineteen years old, was taken along with six other girls by four men and two women to China in June, 2009, after being told they were going to work there. But on the evening they were taken, they were locked up in a room and were not allowed to go out. After they had overheard their captor's conversation indicating they would be sold to other places to become wives for Chinese men, the Burmese girls broke the lock on the door and escaped during the night. Just as they ran outside, they were discovered. They then ran in all different directions at night and Mijiaye was sent to the government by some kind-hearted people (Cui, 2010).

3- The Trafficking Process

Trafficking across countries often involves organized crime gangs. There is a controversy regarding the nature of the trafficking network, namely the human smugglers who traffic human beings into or out of China. Some researchers think the human smuggler group is an organized and sophisticated criminal financial group, but others stress that the network is made up of loosely linked individuals. However, both sides agree that the trafficking networks are inside the source community and it is hard for the authorities to determine their whereabouts (Le Bach et al., 2007). Sometimes one or several persons take advantage of the neighboring country's women who are counting on a better job in China, trafficked under the guise of

recruiting waitresses, ticket sellers, secretaries and other jobs (Zhu and Sun, 2000). Although most worldwide reports indicate women are being trafficked by men, several recent East Asian reports show the trend of women engaged in trafficking. Some women themselves have been trafficked and they are then forced to deceive other women, or are driven by profits and revenge taking. After being sold to China, they begin to deceive others and turn from being victims into being victimizers (Lee, 2005). They are said to play an important role in alleviating the trafficking victims' psychological pressure and fear in the process of women trafficking and they are also often more deceptive.

Trafficking in Burmese women has become an industry. More than 1,000 people engaged in trafficking Burmese women to China in the neighboring villages of Burma (the number of members of a trafficked gang foiled by China in 2009 reached up to 70). The trafficking process usually includes five steps. First, Burmese traffickers target women in their own country and use the lure of earning money, traveling and finding a good man to marry in China as bait ; secondly, Burmese traffickers inform trafficker in Yunnan by phone or email of the age, appearance and character of the girl who will possibly be taken to China; third, traffickers in Yunnan contact traffickers in the mainland, who are responsible for looking for buyers and agree on the price; fourth, Burma traffickers trade the trafficked women with traffickers in Yunnan on the borders; the last step involves transportation, which means transporting trafficked women safely into the buyers' hands (Cui, 2010). Recently, the new situation is that the trafficking gangs have set up underground shelters in Ruili, Yunnan Province, where they have settled down and rent for long-term. They are responsible for the chain business of the trafficked women's selling and exchange, which is just like the branch office established in Yunnan (Cui, 2010).

There are usually two ways of trafficking North Korean women. One way is that the trafficking gang intercepts North Korean women living in China who will be sold once they were found out and whose price is determined by their age and appearance (Hughes, 2007; U.S Department of State, 2007). These victims cross the border in search of food or turn to their Chinese relatives for help and they often

plan to return soon. However, they are vulnerable to being easily kidnapped by traffickers once they cross the borders, which are controlled by some ethnic Chinese Koreans who make use of their weakness, leading to being detained or arrested by Chinese police within the boundaries of China, or receiving the severe punishment of being sent back (Kim et al., 2009). When some criminals find out about a border family who detained a North Korean woman, they break into the house pretending to be policemen or border-defense policemen with suits or fake pistols to kidnap the North Korean woman by force and then sell her (Pei and Wang, 2000). The other way of trafficking is by the promise of freedom and jobs. North Korean women are trafficked in their own country, sold as brides or engaged in sex service industry. Traffickers often deceive them by claiming to provide a good job opportunity or a good marriage in China, regarded by the victims as the only opportunity to survive or to support their North Korean family, as many North Korean women live in conditions of despair; but they will be sold once they cross the border (Hughes, 2007; U.S Department of State, 2007).

From the point of criminals trafficking North Korean women, it is known that there are few trafficking organizations and that these activities were just committed occasionally by individuals before 1996. However, more and more individuals have joined the trafficking organizations by setting up networks and eventually forming a criminal gang. There are criminal groups consisting of North Koreans, Chinese ethnic Koreans and Chinese, who are well-organized. They have a clear assignment within the group and there are people especially responsible from overseas to the homeland, from the border to the mainland (Pei and Wang, 2000; Kim et al., 2009) . The trafficking process largely includes the following stages. In the first stage, as they are familiar with the situation, the native North Koreans and Chinese ethnic Koreans on the borders are responsible for collecting information on the possibly trafficked North Korean women and then deceive or lure the latter with the promise of a good job or marriage. In order to traffic these women to China it is necessary to cross the borders and to bribe the border guards. During the second stage, the traffickers play an intermediary role. The intermediary traffickers often work independently; they

are the Chinese ethnic Koreans in the criminal gang, responsible for receiving North Korean women from Korean traffickers by taking advantage of their familiarity with the language and culture. If the intermediary traffickers can contact buyers directly they would let them choose. Otherwise, the trafficked women are sold to the organizational ethnic Han Chinese criminal groups, who determine where the women are to be sold. The third stage concerns the final buyers and the destination. These trafficked women are finally sold to the last buyers, who are divided into two groups, namely the owners of pornography businesses and Chinese men seeking brides (Kim et al., 2009). Many these women are forced to marry Chinese men living in villages in the northeast of China, especially men who are seeking brides in the Yanbian Korean Nationality Autonomous Prefecture (Jiang and Li, 2009).

4- Rescue Action

4.1- The International Community

Human trafficking or slavery is one form of crime. Because of its serious effects world-wide and its threat to the entire international society, the international community has the responsibility to jointly punish these crimes. Population trafficking across countries has become a global problem, which has received a great deal of attention from all international organizations, in all areas and countries. Strengthening international cooperation has become an effective way to fight against the trafficking groups across boundaries (Zhang and Liu, 2006). Recently, international communities have become concerned about such crimes and have successively convened a series of important conferences related with trafficking, such as international specialized agencies, UN Children's Fund, Human Rights Commission, the UN Women Development Foundation and UN Population Activity Foundation, which all pay special attention to the crime of international women and children trafficking.

On November 15, 2000, *U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* was passed by the 55th United Nations' General Assembly and on the basis of

which formulated an Agreement dealing with human trafficking, namely the *Supplement Protocol on the Prevention, Ban and Punishment of Human Trafficking, esp. Women and Children*, which took effect on December 25, 2003. *Supplement Protocol* is an important legal document for the UN combating human trafficking, whose aim is to strengthen international cooperation to prevent and fight against human trafficking, especially trafficking women and children and to protect and help the victims. It is also an international legal document which provides solutions to all of the problems of human trafficking and which announced that effective actions must be taken to prevent and fight against international human trafficking, especially women and children. The comprehensive international actions must be applied to the original residential, transit and destination country to protect and help the victims on the condition of respecting human rights. *Supplement Protocol* stressed that related countries must communicate quickly and efficiently to obtain criminal information and evidence and thereby strengthen cooperation. This protocol is helpful in taking concerted actions to further control crimes efficiently and prevents human trafficking. In 2007, the United Nations launched *Initiatives against Global Human Trafficking*, calling for the countries which have not joined to adhere as soon as possible. As of October 22, 2009, 132 countries and European Communities have approved or joined the *Supplement Protocol*.

4.2- Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation

The fight against the crime of transnational organized human trafficking needs to involve strengthening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. China has strengthened cooperation with all of the countries in Asia. In February 2002, the *Asia-pacific Region's Fight against Smuggling, Human Trafficking and Related Transnational Crimes Questions Ministerial Meeting* was held in Bali (Indonesia) and the *Third Meeting of Second Specialists Group* of these participating countries sponsored by the Chinese Public Security Ministry was held on November 25, 2002 in Shenzhen (Zhen, 2002). In January 2004, each of the ten countries' representatives attending the first ASEAN reached a consensus with representatives from China,

Japan and Korea (10+3) on *Ministerial Meeting on the Fight against Transnational Crimes* and putting the 10+3 framework into the use of security fields will be beneficial for all East Asian countries for constructing a law enforcement cooperation mechanism, fight against transnational crimes, to promote regional peace and development and crack down on human trafficking (Yuan and Li, 2004). In 2004, the six Mekong river countries of China, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand Vietnam jointly signed the Mekong Sub-regional Cooperation against Human Trafficking Memorandum. In the areas of ASEAN, China's public security ministry signed a series of bilateral police cooperation agreements with police departments from Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, Laos, Burma and Indonesia, which fight against trafficking women and children and regard it as an important task of cooperation.

In June 2004, the government delegation of Vietnam and China launched a campaign to fight against trafficking women and children on the two countries' border. The transnational cooperation has to improve from organized joint field investigation, information exchange, rescue and repatriation to the reinforcement of law and legislation, including the coordination of relations between national laws and international conventions and standards (Feng, 2004).

4.3- The Chinese Government

Trafficking women causes tragedy and pain for family and individuals and has brought about great harm and negative consequences, which is an obstacle to the construction of a harmonious society. Chinese government has long been aware of the severity of this problem as well as its harmful and long-lasting effects and is determined to seriously attack the crime of trafficking women. So far, China has formed legal systems which crack down on the crime of trafficking women, which gives priority to Criminal Law and is supported by relevant law and administrative regulations, as well as department regulations, which play a positive role in cracking down on all the crimes of trafficking and its criminals.

On December 26, 2009, the standing committee of China's National People's Congress made an important decision by voting joining the *Supplement Protocol on*

United Nations Convention against Organized Crimes about Prevention, Ban and Punishment of Human Trafficking, esp. Trafficking Women and Children, which is conducive to strengthening international cooperation between China and other countries or international organizations in cracking down on the crimes of human trafficking. In 2007, according to People's Republic of China's Constitution, the Criminal Law and a series of laws, the Chinese government formulated the *Chinese Action Plan against Trafficking Women and Children (2008-2012)*, involving 28 ministries and various areas against human trafficking on prevention, attacking and rescue of victims, repatriation and rehabilitation and international cooperation. In March, 2010, in order to increase the judicial protection of women and children's legitimate rights and interests, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, Ministry of Public Security and the Justice Department announced jointly the *Opinions on Punishing Crimes of Trafficking Women and Children in Accordance with Laws*, which expanded applicable objects for the crime of trafficking women and children and increased the detection and punishment of such crimes..

In 2011, police in the city of Tongling, in the province of Anhui, broke a Vietnamese trafficking case, saving two trafficked Vietnamese women and knocking out a transnational gang, which consisted of more than 10 members and which was spread out over counties and towns in the province of Yunnan (Lin, 2011). In 2011, Shandong province heard a case of trafficking more than ten women from Burma to Shandong. Because the case involved trafficking foreign women, it was given much more attention from the Supreme Court and the Higher People's Court in Shandong Province (Zheng and Sun, 2011).

The Chinese government has also taken countermeasures against the increasing sex ratio at birth (SRB) which causes the imbalance in marriage market and creates a huge buyer's market for trafficked women, as it is estimated that there will be over 30 million surplus males. One of the most influential of these measures is 'The Care for Girls Campaign'. This was initiated in an experimental zone and is now implemented nationwide; its aim is to combat gender discrimination against girls and high SRB (Hvistendahl 2009). China's fertility policy has strengthened

deeply-rooted son preference which has increased the rate of abortion. In fact, the government's fertility policy (usually called 1.5-child policy in rural areas, namely, those areas where a second child was permitted if the first was a girl) is actually telling farmers that the value of a girl is not as great as that of a boy. The 1.5-child policy has stimulated son preference and prenatal sex identification, which have produced seriously abnormal sex ratios (Zeng, 2007). In 2000, the sex ratio at birth in those 1.5 children policy areas was 124.7, which is 15.7 percentage points higher than the ratio 109.0 in two-children areas, indicating clearly the impact of sex-selective abortions (Gu et al., 2007). As China's fertility policy contributed significantly to the increase in SRB, scholars now advocate the relaxing of the stringent fertility policy which has been in practice for over 30 years (Gu et al., 2007; Zeng, 2007).

4.4- Other Countries' Efforts

In addition, some countries also formulated relevant policies and laws to prevent and save their own trafficked women. The Vietnamese government established some plans of action such as the *Vietnamese Women's Federation Action Plan on the Prevention and Fight against Trafficking Women and Children from 2004 to 2007* and the Vietnamese Premier Minister promulgated *Vietnam 2004-2010 Prevention and Fight against Trafficking Women and Children Action Plan* which holds that all levels of government, departments and groups lack the necessary seriousness, understanding and responsibility to strengthen the prevention and fight against crimes of trafficking women and children. It also considers that the prevention and fight against trafficking women is not fully wide spread and that an unclosed department failed to meet the demands of cracking down on trafficking women and children in light of the new circumstances. The Vietnamese government made efforts to offer protection for the trafficked victims in the past, appropriating special fund to rescue the victims from overseas. The local governments usually cooperate with the non-government organizations and provide support for the returned trafficked victims through job training, giving them cultivated land or a small loan (U.S.

Department of State, 2007) .

5- Obstacle to Prevention and Rescue

Obstacles to preventing transnational trafficking and rescuing the trafficked women overseas come from China and are affected by the greater international environment.

5.1- Domestic Environment

One reason for the rampant human trafficking lies in the imbalanced sex ratio. It is estimated that about 40 million bare branches are restive because of the scarcity of women, which promotes the development of human trafficking and creates a huge buyer's market (Jiang and Sánchez-Barricarte, 2011). In ancient China, purchasing slaves, concubines and wives was widely accepted. Under traditional morals, it is seen as reasonable for a man to buy a woman as a tool for producing a child, thus purchasing the trafficked women has an accepted base. The bare branches insist that buying wives is their own business and if only they had money they would do so. Furthermore, some villagers out of a sense of local protection stand by the males that have bought wives, helping the men buying wives with the custody of the trafficked women and hiding traffickers from policemen; they even obstruct and besiege policemen when they attempt to save these trafficked women (Jiang and Li, 2009; Jiang and Sánchez-Barricarte, 2011). People maintain tacit agreement, which means the whole family or the villagers help to guard and persuade the trafficked women to stay (Mo, 2005). Once women from other places are trafficked to the remote backward areas, the villagers undertake the responsibility of preventing the trafficked women from running away and even work together to block the rescue (Peng, 2004).

As some government and organizations at the grass root level do not take actions or fear to act against the local people, they are tolerant the crimes of trafficking and silently allow them. The village cadres and government officials at the grass roots level all regard human trafficking as a help to unmarried males, a solution

for the marriage of single males' when brides are imported from abroad, which is also helpful in reducing the number of the single males and maintaining public order in the localities (Zhao, 2003). One village leader said that it was a good thing for girls to come, no matter how: "Our village girls are few, but there are quite a lot of bare branches... Our village's problem is solved by villagers themselves through raising money to get a wife" (Peng, 2004).

From the point of view of laws and regulations, there are no specialized laws to punish international trafficking, whereas the criminal punishment is too slight and the pressure on the buyers is not adequate, leading to the failure of eliminating woman and children trafficking at its source. The established long-term cooperation mechanism between each government department has not been fully implemented and cooperation between government and non-government on trafficking has not been well-established, while the checking and supervising system is imperfect. The other important problem is that some government officials are corrupt, partaking in trafficking collusion and even accepting bribes to ignore the problem of human trafficking (Lee, 2005; Sheehan, 2009).

In addition, the crackdown on transnational women trafficking must confront the following difficulties: first, trafficking criminals are not easy to be prosecuted because of the number of members and the different nationalities and because the trafficked women have been sold many times; the second difficulty stems from the long legal procedures and foreign affairs in breaking such cases, lack of policemen and financial support; third, the rescued women do not wish to go back to their former home, as the living conditions in China are much better than those in their own country, or some women have fallen in love with their husbands or have children, so their dependence and feelings for their family make it hard for them to leave; the fourth is that household register management in rural areas is in chaos; there is an inadequate number of policemen undertaking the household register and their investigation of the rural population lags behind the actual conditions, which is a stumbling block to determining the information necessary to rescue the trafficked women.

5.2-International Political Environment

First of all, geographically speaking, it can be seen that China has a long border with neighboring countries such as North Korea, Burma and Vietnam, which makes it convenient for criminals to traffic women across these countries. China's economy and development are attractive to the women from these countries which makes them the object of trafficking.

Secondly, the political environment also impedes the prevention and the fight against transnational human trafficking. North Korean's weak economy and unstable political situation make it impossible to feed all the population. The lack of jobs and the threat of starvation lead more and more desperate people to abduct or be abducted in order to survive. The North Korean government does not admit to the problem of trafficking and refuses to allow the United Nation workers' to investigate it. The lack of wide-spread information relating to this issue contributes to people's ignorance regarding illegal trafficking. Furthermore, the government does not provide medical services for the repatriated women or those with mental trauma, which makes it easy for them to be traded again (Davis, 2006). Although the international community has repeatedly stressed China's cooperation in solving North Korean's problems, it does not mean the problem can be solved only by China's efforts.

Years of higher pressure rule and international sanctions in Burma have made the new Burmese generation pay more attention to economic development and be concerned about trafficking and related policies. Burma's practice is for the police to record the case and ask for China's help to rescue only on the condition of the relatives requesting help. However, most of the relatives are kept in the dark and they do not know that their daughters or sisters have been sold to China. Tricked by the Burmese traffickers, the relatives probably think the child would have a good life in China (Cui, 2010).

Finally, the international cooperation is inadequate except for the official cooperation between Vietnam and Burma, although there are slight cooperative

efforts between China and other countries. There are few communication and cooperative projects to crack down on trafficking women no matter whether it is between the governments or the folk groups; another area of concern is the unstable international environment, such as the North Korean nuclear problem, the recent Mekong River massacre and the incident involving Chinese sailors killed by Thailand soldiers. The instability in these areas affect to a greater or lesser extent bilateral cooperation in the fight to crack down women trafficking.

6- Conclusion and Discussion

The shortage of women in certain areas has increased the control of women through trafficking, compulsory marriage or forced labor (Le Bach et al., 2007). Recently, because of China's more obvious imbalanced gender ratio and the existing poverty in some areas, a large number of older males have not been able to marry. The men who have not been able to find a spouse in their own country cast their eyes abroad and thus illegal transnational marriage has come into being from the source countries, such as North Korea, Vietnam, Burma, Laos and Cambodia. In the following decades, it cannot be ruled out that transnational trafficking crimes will not proliferate as China's imbalanced gender ratio continues to exist. The traditional notions and practices lead to people believing a person can be exchanged as a commodity, thereby resulting in a huge buyers' market in China. Trafficking women can also lead to other crimes, such as murder, rape and kidnapping, thereby posing a threat to social stability (Pei and Wang, 2000).

Most of the trafficked women from neighboring countries have little education and even less social experience and so they are easily deceived due to the language barrier and their lack of understanding of China. Furthermore, the source countries have not performed well in women's social welfare, education, job training and rights protection, which also make them easier targets for abduction. In the process of trafficking, these women suffer from physical and psychological abuse. Trafficking women abroad is carried out against their will, achieved through treachery and violence. The abducted women are deprived of their basic rights as they are cheated,

kidnapped, bought, received and handed over, while facing continuous health problems and hardships in returning to their family and community after being rescued.

Recently, the cases of trafficking across countries and China's border having been increasing. The criminal organizations are more rigorous and their methods are more and more surreptitious, which makes it difficult to prevent and crack down on it, threatening women and children's safety and social stability. Although China has stipulated a series of laws and joined the fight against trafficking crimes with its neighboring countries, it still needs to perfect its laws and engage in firmer actions. China's fight against trafficking faces a serious, long-term challenge.

Trafficking women and children severely violates their basic human rights, on which the international communities have reached a consensus. The creation and existence of trafficking has multiple causes, such as the international and domestic environment, culture and economy. In a systematic effort to eliminate women and children trafficking, not only is close cooperation to set up an effective mechanism domestically necessary, but also positive cooperation and joint efforts between countries must be carried out.

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